High level talks between India and Pakistan

438. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether a round of high level talks between India and Pakistan was held in Delhi in January last;

(b) if so, the specific subjects discussed during the talks, the decisions arrived at and the follow up action proposed to be taken by the two Governments to implement them; and

(c) whether there were serious differences on certain issues, if so, the details thereof and whether the two Governments have decided to further discuss those issues, if so, the location and schedule thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan met in New Delhi on 17-18 January, 2006 to commence the third round of talks under the India-Pakistan Composite Dialogue framework.

(b) and (c) During the talks, India and Pakistan discussed issues related to 'Peace and Security including CBMs' and 'Jammu and Kashmir'. They assessed the developments in bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction at the progress made during the Composite Dialogue process. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to move forward the peace process in a meaningful way during the third round, recalling the outcome of the discussions between the President of Pakistan and Prime Minister of India reflected in the Joint Statements of 6 January 2004, 24 September 2004, 18 April 2005 and 14 September 2005.

On the issue of Peace and Security including CBMs, the two Foreign Secretaries reviewed and assessed positively the progress made during the meetings of experts on Nuclear land Conventional CBMs. They agreed to mandate the two experts groups to continue consultations on confidence building in the nuclear and conventional fields aimed at avoidance of conflict. These include, *inter alia,* consideration of an agreement on "Reducing Risk of Nuclear Accidents or Unauthorised Use of Nuclear Weapons", conclusion of an agreement on prevention of incidents at sea, elaborating

the agreement reached on no development of new posts and defence works along the LoC, and modalities for the conduct of already agreed monthly flag meetings between local commanders at the selected sectors.

They had a detailed exchange of views on Jammu and Kashmir and agreed to continue the sustained dialogue in a purposeful and forward-looking manner to find a peaceful and negotiated final settlement. They also discussed the process of promoting greater interaction between divided families, the commencement of the Poonch—Rawalakot bus service and the truck service on Muzaffarabad-Srinagar route for trade in permitted goods as soon as the infrastructure damaged during the October, 2005 earthquake is restored.

The two Foreign Secretaries discussed consular access and early repatriation of all civilian prisoners and fishermen, reopening of the Consulates General in Mumbai and Karachi and the schedule of meetings under the Composite Dialogue framework. Both sides also agreed to hold early meetings of the technical level working groups of the Joint Commission.

Opening of Missions in Nepal

439. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that China and Pakistan propose to open their missions in Nepal in the areas bordering India; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (b) Government of India has seen reports in the media suggesting the possibility of China and Pakistan opening their Consulates in the areas bordering India. However, no concrete information regarding such proposals has come to the notice of the Government. Government remains alert to all developments affecting India's national security interests.